

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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P R 222014Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8097

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

J/USSOUTHCOM

AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, EFIN, PFOR, CH, CO

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ ENGAGED IN A LARGELY ROUTINE CABINET SHUFFLE; OTHER MINISTERIAL CHANGES CAN BE EXPECTED IN COMING MONTHS. THE GOC ADOPTED MEASURES TO STIFFEN THE STATE OF SIEGE WHILE THE TROUBLED NATIONAL UNIVERSITY WAS RECESSED TILL MID-NOVEMBER. THE SOCIAL SECURITY DOCTORS' STRIKE APPEARED TO BE ENDING. THE WORLD BANK CONSULTATIVE GROUP WAS PRESENTED BY THE GOC WITH A LIST OF PROJECTS WHICH WOULD REQUIRE \$2.2 BILLION IN FOREIGN FINANCING. FONMIN LIEVANO ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOC WAS WIEGHING RECOGNITION OF THE PRC. THE GO SEEMED SYMPATHETIC TOWARD THE U.S. POSITION AT THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE BUT ITS DELEGATION MAY ENJOY SOME DISCRETION. END SUMMARY.

2. CABINET CHANGES. ON OCT 19, PRESIDENT LOPEZ MADE SIX CABINET CHANGES, MOVING THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE TO THE POSITION OF INTERIOR (GOVERNMENT) MINISTER, AND NAMING NEW MINISTERS OF LABOR, HEALTH, COMMUNICATIONS, GRICULTURE, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JUSTICE (BOGOTA 19723). SOME OBSERVERS PREDICTED THAT ORE

CABINET CHANGES WOULD BE FORTHCOMING, INCLUDING PERHAPS EVEN SOME OF THOSE JUST NAMED, WHO I THEY STAY FOR LONGER THAN A FEW MONTHS, BEYOND EARLY 1977, WILL FORFEIT THEIR CHANCES OF RUNNING FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE IN 1978. (THE CONSTITUTION PROHIBITS MOST HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM BEING ELECTED PRESIDENT OR TO CONGRESS UNTIL ONE YEAR AFTER THEY LEAVE THEIR OFFICES). ONE PERSISTENT RUMOR HAS MINISTER OF FINANCE RODRIGO BOTERO BEING NAMED AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES, AND THAT PRESIDENT LOPEZ IS SIMPLY WAITING UNTIL AFTER THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS TO MAKE THIS CHANGE.

3. GOC FLESHES OUT STATE OF SIEGE MEASURES: VIOLENCE CONTINUES. ON OCT 16, THE COLOMBIAN ARMY OCCUPIED THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN BOGOTA FOR THE SECOND TIME IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS. THE GOC LATER ISSUED DECREES PLACING CERTAIN CRIMES UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MILITARY COURTS, AND SET MINIMUM JAIL TERMS FOR INCITING OR PARTICIPATING IN RIOTS AND FOR BURNING VEHICLES (BOGOTA 10697). THE MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO QUELL THE FREQUENT DISTURBANCES IN AND AROUND THE UNIVERSITY. IN APRIL, THE GOC HAD CLOSED DOWN THE UNIVERSITY FOR THREE MONTHS AFTER CONSIDERABLE VIOLENCE. ON THIS PRESENT OCCASION, MINISTER OF EDUCATION DURAN STATED THE INITIATIVES WERE DESIGNED TO SAVE THE ACADEMIC SEMESTER. HE AND OTHER AUTHORITIES CLAIMED THAT NON-STUDENT AGITATORS, SOME OF WHOM WERE RESIDING IN MEN'S RESIDENCE HALLS AT THE BOGOTA CAMPUS, WERE PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TURBULENCE. LATER HE DECLARED A RECESS UNTIL NOV 15 AND ANNOUNCED THAT THE EMERGENCY SECOND SEMESTER, WHICH HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO MAKE UP FOR THE PERIOD WHEN THE SCHOOL WAS CLOSED, WOULD BE LOST. MEANWHILE, SCATTERED VIOLENCE CONTINUED IN BOGOTA, AS WELL AS IN MANIZALES AND MEDELLIN.

4. SOCIAL SECURITY (ICSS) DOCTORS' STRIKE WINDS DOWN. THE STRIKE BY DOCTORS OF THE COLOMBIAN SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE (ICSS), WHICH HAS LASTED OVER A MONTH (BOGOTA 9226), BEGAN WINDING DOWN THIS WEEK. THE DOCTORS SHOWED CONSIDERABLE UNITY THROUGHOUT THE LONG PERIOD, IN PART BECAUSE THE REACTION OF THE GOC AND THE PUBLICITY OF THE PRESS HELPED TO CREATE A CRISIS ATMOSPHERE, LEADING THE DOCTORS TO BELIEVE THAT VICTORY WAS IMMINENT..MEANWHILE, A BILL REQUESTED BY THE GOC GRANTING THE PRESDNET EXTRAORDINARY POWERS TO REORGANIZE THE ICSS HAD BEGUN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WINDING ITS WAY THROUGH THE CONGRESS, WITH A GOOD CHANCE FOR PASSAGE. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE VIOLENCE AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, THE IMPOSITION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE, AND THE VISIT OF THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN LAST WEEK, MOVED THE STRIKE OFF THE FRONT PAGES OF THE COLOMBIAN PRESS, AND THE DOCTORS BEGAN TO RETURN TO WORK. SOME OF THEM APPARENTLY REALIZED THAT THE STRIKE HAD TAKEN ON AN APPEARANCE OF SILLINESS, AS THEIR OWN UNION HAD ESTABLISHED DEMANDS WHICH HAD BEEN GUARANTEED BY

PRESIDENT LOPEZ SHORTLY AFTER THE STRIKE BEGAN, INCLUDING A PROMISE THAT NO GAINS OBTAINED PREVIOUSLY THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WOULD BE ABROGATED, WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REORGANIZATION PLAN.

5. IBRD CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETS. THE WORLD BANK'S CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON COLOMBIA HELD ITS SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING IN BOGOTA THIS WEEK. THE GOC PRESENTED A LIST OF PRELIMINARY PROJECTS WHICH, IF FULLY IMPLEMENTED, WOULD REQUIRE \$2.2 BILLION IN FOREIGN FINANCING BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF 1978. WHILE THE PROJECT LIST ENCOMPASSES ALL MAJOR SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY, EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON POWER GENERATION AND INDUSTRY, PRIMARILY DEVELOPMENTS IN COAL, NICKEL AND REFINERY EXPANSION. THE MAJOR HYDRO PROJECTS LISTED INCLUDED THE URRRA DAM WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT, MIGHT WELL BE UNDERTAKEN AS A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND ONE OR MORE WESTERN COMPANIES (WESTINGHOUSE HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY THE SOVIETS). ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER OF MINES, A SOVIET DELEGATION WILL ARRIVE IN BOGOTA NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS THE URRRA PROJECT.

6. GOC CONSIDERING RECOGNITION OF PRC. FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO TOLD THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OCT 20 THAT THE GOC IS CONSIDERING THE RECOGNITION OF THE PRC AND IS AWAITING AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO DO SO. A SENIOR FONOFF OFFICIAL TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT RECOGNITION WOULD PROBABLY OCCUR DURING 1977. (BOGOTA 10800).

7. MULTILATERAL: UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE (GC). A FONOFF OFFICIAL INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT FONOFF INSTRUCTIONS TO THE COLOMBIAN DELEGATION TO THE UNESCO GC WOULD PROBABLY ADVISE IT TO SUPPORT THE U. S. POSITION BUT INDICATED THAT THE DELEGATION WOULD HAVE DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY TO ACT ACCORDING TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEVELOPMENTS AT THE GC. (SEPTTEL).
SANCHEZ

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